

Excision of a Skin Lesion

What is excision of a skin lesion?

An excision of a skin lesion is a procedure in which your healthcare provider removes a sore or growth (a lesion) from your skin and stitches the skin back together.

When is it used?

Reasons for doing this procedure are:

- The lesion on your skin is too big, bothersome, or unsightly.
- The lesion may be cancerous or precancerous.
- The lesion may rub against your clothing or is irritating or uncomfortable.

How do I prepare for excision of a skin lesion?

Follow any instructions your healthcare provider may give you. No special preparation is needed for local anesthesia.

What happens during the procedure?

The healthcare provider cleanses the area and then numbs the skin around the lesion with a spray or shot of a local anesthetic. The anesthetic should keep you from feeling pain during the operation. Your provider cuts a football-shaped patch of skin around the lesion. He or she removes the patch of skin with the lesion and then stitches your skin together.

What happens after the procedure?

You may stay at the hospital or healthcare provider's office for observation for a short period of time. The area where the lesion was removed may be sore for a couple of days. When it heals, there will be a scar.

You should ask your healthcare provider:

- how to care for the wound
- what other steps you should take
- when you should come back for a checkup.

This procedure may remove the lesion, but it may not cure whatever caused the lesion to form.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

The sore area may heal and stop being uncomfortable. If it was a precancerous or cancerous growth, its removal may stop the development or spread of cancer. If the lesion was caused by a disease, lab tests of the lesion may help your healthcare provider diagnose the problem.

If the removal was done to check for cancer, ask your provider when you will receive test results.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- A local anesthetic may not numb the area quite enough and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia.
- You may have infection or bleeding.
- If the lesion was a cancerous or precancerous growth, it may grow back.
- A lumpy scar called a keloid may grow where the lesion was.

You should ask your healthcare provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You have an unusual amount of bleeding.
- You are developing symptoms of infection, such as redness, drainage, and increasing pain.

Call during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.

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